

Ideology and Citizenship: Acting for Change

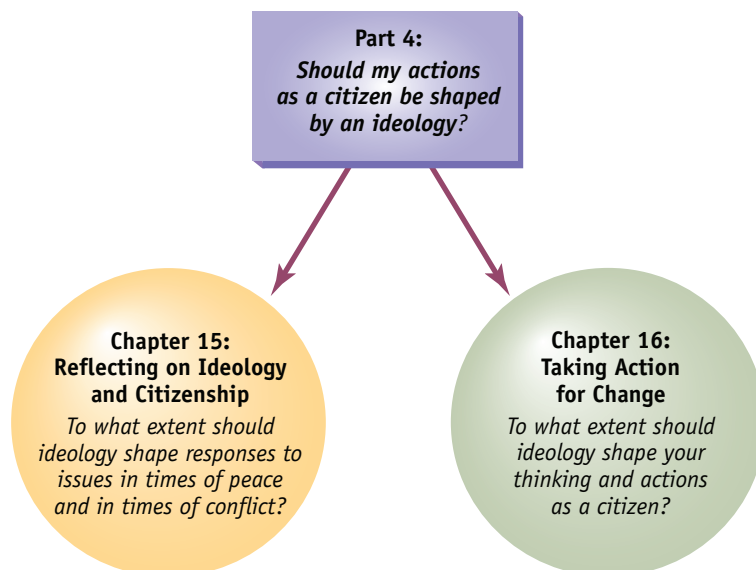
In this final section of *Understandings of Ideologies* you will determine your course of action as a citizen in response to local, national, and global issues, once you have identified your ideology and examined your answers to the three fundamental questions:

- What are humans like, and why do they act as they do?
- What is the nature of society?
- What is the role of the individual in society?

Actions you take should be consistent with your ideological values, as well as with your worldview, identity, and understanding of citizenship. In liberal democracies, this includes rights and responsibilities and how you see your role and the government's role in society. These last chapters will also allow you to consider possible understandings of citizenship.

Determining what action is appropriate may range from inaction (doing nothing) to civil disobedience. You will need to determine what methods of action best fit with the issues you are addressing and with your values. These final chapters will also look at leadership, strategies for planning action, and individual and co-operative initiatives for citizen action.

No matter what you choose to do, it is important to “walk your talk.” Meaningful work, leisure activities, charitable activities, travels, and relationships that reflect with your worldview and ideology are an important part of living out your identity and citizenship in society. Demonstrating respect for the beliefs and values of others can also contribute to how you can shape the world around you.



To help you begin to explore your citizenship in Part 4, consider the following scenarios:

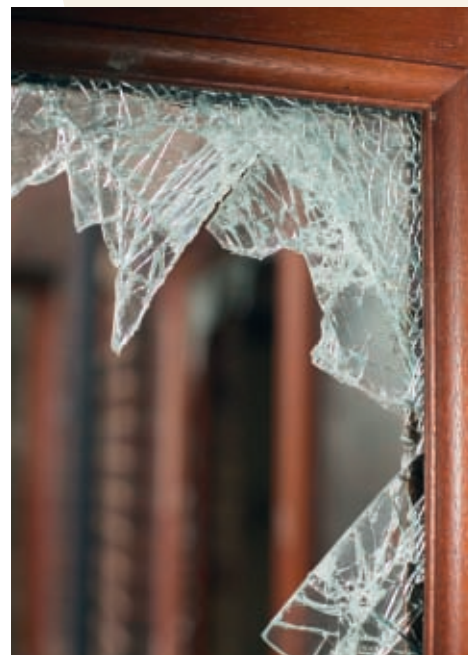
- You have witnessed a crime involving people you know and the victim is a stranger. Your response can be to report what you know on behalf of the victim or to stand by and do nothing.
- An organization or group of volunteers has identified a critical problem in the community—local or global—that needs to be addressed. Do you lead the group, join the group, or do you avoid the issue?

Are you an “upstander” or a bystander?

Of course, there are many things to consider before taking action. Your actions must be in keeping with your own personal beliefs and values and be consistent with the ideology that you have adopted. But that is just the beginning. The real question is: What are you going to do about it?

Some individuals immediately jump in and try to fix the problem. Others may be more reflective and, after much research and contemplation, decide to act. Still others may reason that they could not have done anything to stop the crime and that it was not their problem.

In *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Samantha Power identifies two responses she believes people typically take when faced with a strong ethical or moral challenge. They can either be “upstanders” and involve themselves in the solution, or bystanders who opt out. Power says that individuals are powerful enough to encourage governments to act and make policies. Without the interest and pressure of involved citizens, governments would stand by and do nothing. She calls this “generating political will.” How would you act in response to issues, such as witnessing a crime or a natural disaster? Do you agree with Power that you can only be an “upstander” or a bystander? To what extent are there other decisions or actions that you can take as a citizen? What kind of citizen are you today and do you want to be in the future?



▲ (above) A broken window is a reminder of a crime committed; (below) a line of volunteer sandbaggers in Lockport, Manitoba, works to prevent the flooding of the Red River in March 2009.

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Visit the LearnAlberta.ca website at www.LearnAlberta.ca and select Social Studies and Grade 12 resources; then, select the *Understandings of Ideologies* digital resource for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios are directly related to the issues and concepts and the four parts in the Student Resource to enhance learning.

